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Reproductive Cloning – Sincerely, The Inevitable

In Lee M. Silver’s book, *Remaking Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World* depicts the use of cloning as a means of reproduction as inevitable, and though moral issues arise, cannot be considered a concrete argument against it.

In a situation where, in the distant future, a single woman wanted a child with no unknown factors from a sperm donor, she could make the decision to clone herself. Silver illustrates this scenario with a prosperous single woman named Jennifer. As cloning is illegal in the U.S., Jennifer goes out of her way – and out of the country – to be artificially inseminated with her own DNA, thus creating her cloned baby girl, Rachel.

The question is asked, “How will the knowledge of being physically identical effect Rachel mentally?” After all, it does take away her unique somatic attributes. In reply to the posed question, Silver wonders if this knowledge would be so threatening to Rachel’s mentality that she should not have even been born. What about impoverished children whose parent(s) lack the funds and resources to raise one, or multiple children? The situations differ considerably, but the morality of the question remains the same.

Silver recognizes the esteemed views a fellow expert on the subject of bioethics, Dr. Daniel Callahan. Callahan claims that humans have no right to engineer someone’s biotechnical makings. The undertaking of such an act would be similar to providing a window into the child’s future, forcing the child to consider their physical probabilities. Silver argues that, though Rachel’s future condition may be predicted by the life of her mother, other characteristics that come with age or time, such as balding or genetic diseases, are observed in normally procreated persons.

Though Rachel’s genetic makeup mirror’s Jennifer’s, her upbringing will not; therefore they are not the same person. The two will grow up in different times with different technology and opportunities, resulting in different choices and attitudes in each woman’s life.

Silver also recognizes the issue of Rachel’s lineage. Technically speaking, though she was born from Jennifer’s body, she is really Jennifer’s parents’ biological child. Reproductive cloning will redefine the meaning of familial relations.

The argument can be made that Jennifer would subject her child to unrealistic expectations and live vicariously through her life. The same can be said for any “normal” child with parents who wish only for the best opportunities for said child. Silver argues that this should not, and cannot prohibit the creation of one’s offspring.

Of the cloned children, there will be those that will despair over knowledge of their genetic similarities to the parent. This reason alone, Silver retorts, is no better than saying that a child born into poverty shouldn’t be born at all. The cloning shouldn’t be the issue – it’s the accountability of the parents that should be taken into account.

Silver reports that the process of cloning does not tamper with the fetus; only unfertilized eggs are used in addition to regularly regenerated, adult cells, such as those found on the outer layer of skin.

As new technologies are developed in the reprogenetic field, they are incorporated into American culture. The issue of leaving God out of the procreation process cannot be considered a valid argument.

*New York Times* columnist, William Safire, makes the claim that allowing cloning for reproductive purposes would disrupt the evolutionary process. Because said cloning is expensive, it would be restricted to the higher classes of society. Silver retains the upper classes represent only a small fraction of the billions on earth, most of which are reproducing naturally.

Neither the government nor society will be the controllers of cloning – the marketplace will. Where there is a demand, someone will provide a supply. Others will be soon to follow, because there is money to be made.

In the U.S. and other societies, humans have the right to or to not procreate, but cloning brings the opportunity to steal a person’s genetic material without their consent or knowledge.

It only takes one cell to create this reproductive process, and the opportunity to steal a person’s DNA and clone them becomes an attainable possibility.

This opens the floodgates to opportunities such as celebrity cloning. Silver ponders the situation in which there is a market for celebrity DNA, with the incentive of raising them into fame.

Silver shoots this down on the notion that it would take entirely too long – decades even – for the costs to outweigh the benefits.

The retained argument is as follows: As new technologies and opportunities arise, despite all arguments, they will become inevitabilities.

Work Cited

Silver, Lee M. “Jennifer and Rachel.” *Remaking Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World* (1988): 117-25. Rpt. in *Writing in the Disciplines: A Reaader and Rhetoric for Academic Writers,* 6th ed. Ed. Mary Lynch Kennedy and William J. Kennedy. Boston: Pearson 2009. 340-46. Print.